

U.S. SENATE
Updated October 31, 2008

Currently, the U.S. Senate has 49 Republicans, 49 Democrats, and 2 Independents. Since the Independents, Joe Lieberman of Connecticut and Bernie Sanders of Vermont, caucus with the Democrats, the lineup is effectively 51-49. There is little chance that the Democrats will lose control of the Senate. The question is, how close will they come to a filibuster-proof 60-vote majority?

This year, there are 35 seats up for election.

23 are currently held by Republicans.

12 are currently held by Democrats.

5 seats are vacant (the incumbent is not seeking re-election). All are currently held by Republicans. Three will probably be won by Democrats (Colorado, New Mexico and Virginia). All 12 current Democratic seats seem safe.

Overall, the Democrats need to win 21 of the 35 seats to reach a filibuster-proof 60 (assuming Lieberman does not decide to caucus with the Republicans). All 8 of the seats that have hotly contested elections are currently held by Republicans. Democrats will have to win 6 of these 8 seats to reach 60.

Here is how the 35 seats shape up, as of this writing:

Safe/Very Likely Democratic (15)

Arkansas (Mark Pryor)
Colorado (Mark Udall)
Delaware (Joe Biden)
Illinois (Dick Durbin)
Iowa (Tom Harkin)
Louisiana (Mary Landrieu)
Massachusetts (John Kerry)
Michigan (Carl Levin)
Montana (Max Baucus)
New Jersey (Frank Lautenberg)
New Mexico (Tom Udall)
Rhode Island (Jack Reed)
South Dakota (Tim Johnson)
Virginia (Mark Warner)
West Virginia (Jay Rockefeller)

Safe/Very Likely Republican (12)

Alabama (Jeff Sessions)
Idaho (Jim Risch)
Kansas (Pat Roberts)
Maine (Susan Collins)
Mississippi (Thad Cochran)
Nebraska (Mike Johanns)
Oklahoma (Jim Inhofe)
South Carolina (Lindsay Graham)
Tennessee (Lamar Alexander)
Texas (John Cornyn)
Wyoming (John Barrasso)
Wyoming (Michael Enzi)

Alaska - Ted Stevens, Republican incumbent

This has been very close, but Stevens now faces 7 felony convictions and both McCain and Palin have called for him to resign. Undoubtedly, Mark Begich should now win this one.

Prediction: DEMOCRATS PICK-UP ALASKA SEAT

Georgia – Saxby Chambliss, Republican incumbent

Democrats would love to knock off Chambliss, who ran an extremely low campaign to win 6 years ago. Plus, this may be the seat the Dems need for a 60-vote majority. However, this is still Georgia.

Prediction: REPUBLICANS HOLD GEORGIA SEAT

Kentucky – Mitch McConnell, Republican incumbent

The Democrat, Bruce Lunsford, has waged a surprisingly tough campaign, and the Democrats would love to knock off the Republican leader in the Senate, but they seem unlikely to do so.

Prediction: REPUBLICANS HOLD KENTUCKY SEAT

Minnesota – Norm Coleman, Republican incumbent

Comedian and talk show host Al Franken is the Democratic candidate, with Barkley, the Independent Party candidate getting significant support (including former Governor Jesse Ventura). This looked like an easy win for Coleman until Barkley started gaining support. If Barkley gets 10% – 12% or less, Coleman wins. If Barkley is up around 16%, Franken has a good chance.

Prediction: REPUBLICANS HOLD MINNESOTA SEAT

Mississippi – Roger Wicker, Republican incumbent

Democratic candidate, former Governor Ronnie Musgrove has kept this quite close in a very Republican state. But a Demo pick-up seems unlikely, barring an Obama tidal wave.

Prediction: REPUBLICANS HOLD MISSISSIPPI SEAT

New Hampshire – John Sununu, Republican incumbent

In a rematch from 2002, popular former Governor Jeanne Shaheen has been ahead throughout the campaign in a state that is becoming increasingly Democratic, although she has not had a huge lead.

Prediction: DEMOCRATS PICK UP NEW HAMPSHIRE SEAT

North Carolina – Elizabeth Dole, Republican incumbent

This will be a very close race. Dole ran a commercial this week that tried to tie Democratic challenger Kay Hagan to a group of atheists, implying that she is an atheist herself, even though she conducts classes at her church every week. Hagan has been ahead by a small margin throughout the campaign.

Prediction: DEMOCRATS PICK UP NORTH CAROLINA SEAT

Oregon – Gordon Smith, Republican incumbent

In increasingly Democratic Oregon, State House Speaker Jeff Merkley has had a lead over unpopular Senator Gordon Smith throughout most of the campaign. He should be able to hold onto his lead and ride along with an Obama victory here.

Prediction: DEMOCRATS PICK UP OREGON SEAT

FINAL PREDICTED TOTALS

Democrats win 19 seats
Republicans win 16 seats

Senate will have: 42 Republicans
 56 Democrats
 2 Independents caucusing with the Democrats